

# 児童へのバイリンガルリテラシー教育 Bilingual Literacy Education for Young Children

両親指導による土曜学校についての報告  
A Report on a Parent-run Saturday School

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Keywords

児童バイリンガル教育, 土曜学校, 両親の態度, 二言語読み書き能力  
Child Bilingual Education, Saturday School, Parental Attitudes, Biliteracy

## ABSTRACT

本論文では、児童のバイリンガル教育に関する一プロジェクトについて報告する。このプロジェクトは口頭による会話だけでなく、読み書きを含めたバイリンガル児童を育てることを目的としており、混合言語家族の両親によって組織された土曜学校においてなされている。土曜学校の発展過程、両親からのインプットと態度、授業形態や学校の組織・運営に関する方法論および教授的な諸問題、達成度、個人差等をそれぞれ報告する。

There is a lengthy history of bilingual-family studies (Saunders 1982; Harding and Riley 1986; Arnberg 1987; Dopke 1992; Baker 1995; Cunningham-Andersson and Andersson 1999; Zentella 1997). Building upon the research of individual and societal bilingualism which tends to focus on adults and school education from psycholinguistic, social-linguistic and educational perspectives (Baker 1996; Baker and Jones 1998; Fishman 1970; Grosjean 1982; Hamers and Blanc 1989; Hoffmann 1991; Romaine 1995), studies on family bilinguality explore areas such as family language systems, parental input and attitudes, children's language learning (spoken and literacy), biculturalism, language maintenance, community environment, etc (Shi 2000; 2001a). There are publications and online sources aimed at a specific audience such as newsletters for bilingual families produced by publishers as well as related conferences (*Bilingual Family Newsletter* : [http://www.multilingual-matters.com/multi/journals\\_bfn.asp](http://www.multilingual-matters.com/multi/journals_bfn.asp); Bilingual Japan: [http://www.kagawa-jc.ac.jp/~steve\\_mc/jaltbsig/links.html](http://www.kagawa-jc.ac.jp/~steve_mc/jaltbsig/links.html)). The accumulation of case studies assists in the observation of how bilinguals acquire languages and how two or more languages can co-develop at the same time (Baker 1996, 2000; Tabors 1997; Deuchar and Quay 2000; Noguchi 2001a, 2000b). There is wide diversity regarding: motivation towards learning more than one language, attitudes towards the languages, the cultural implications attached to those languages and the social environment in which child bilinguals function in the languages. This diversity belies as well as constitutes the complexity of the issues in child and family bilingualism. In order to grasp how the different factors that

attribute to the bilinguality of children inter-relate, both formal and informal settings should be observed.

The study of family bilingual education, therefore, provides a vehicle to investigate the "hidden" elements or factors affecting the growth of child bilinguals that may or may not otherwise surface. Bilingual parents who try to raise their children bilingually often face dilemmas in family language policy, language planning, cultural influence, parental input, teaching methodology and linguistic attainment (Arnberg 1987; Baker 1995; Dopke 1992; Harding and Riley 1986; Saunders 1982). Teaching or using a second language with children at home is often the only choice for minority families who do not have the advantage of living in the speech communities of their native or first languages. In such situations, family language policies and parental involvement are crucial in maintaining the non-dominant language at home. It is natural for incipient bilinguals to choose the dominant language of the community in which they reside rather than the native language(s) of their parents. Thus, setting a family policy for young children and providing linguistic input become a fundamental part of family bilingualism. Baker (2000) argues strongly for family support for child bilingual development and states that family attitudes towards bilingualism "determine[s] its fate within the family and in the wider society" (39). Family, being the first or the only ground of bilingual exposure for many pre-school minority children, may well be the most important factor for the success or the survival of bilingual education. Issues such as parental attitudes, strategies, input versus the outcome, or the paths and rate of success of

bilingual education at home have been widely reported and discussed by many researchers and parents (Arnberg 1987; Dopke 1992; Cunningham-Andersson and Andersson 1999; Baker 1995; 2000).

Family bilingual education has its limitations especially regarding the amount of language input, the scope of topics, the emphasis on language skills and interaction with other peers. In families where parents are the main language input source, language input often revolves around daily conversation and everyday topics between parents and children before or after school. Thus, oral communication skills tend to be stronger than literary skills that require more formal training. Lack of interaction with peers also hinders the development of linguistic and cognitive aspects and the motivation and attitudes of child bilinguals. In a study of children in Western Samoa, Ochs (1982) notes that the reason for the delayed acquisition of some children is social and not the linguistic and cognitive input (78). Ochs's case study illustrates the significance of the speech communities and how family bilingual education could benefit from outside peer groups that provide child bilinguals with psychological support as well as authentic and natural environment for language use. "The concept of 'parents as educators' has broadened beyond the original narrow pedagogic focus (helping parents to help their child with reading) towards the notion of a home-school alliance that promotes the wider interests of children as learners in the community." (Wolfendale and Topping 1996: 2)

This paper reports on a case study of a Saturday School, the "Children's Bilingual Education Project (CBEP)" ([\[icu.ac.jp/frameset\\\_E.html\]\(http://icu.ac.jp/frameset\_E.html\)\) organized by a group of bilingual parents in Tokyo aiming to maintain their bilingual children's English language development, especially literacy skills, and to create a speech community \(a peer group with children of similar age, motivation and level of proficiency\) for their bilingual children. As a part of a longitudinal research on family bilingualism and child literacy development \(Shi, in progress\), provisional results on the organization and evolution of the Saturday School, methodological and pedagogical issues, language attainment, children's differences as well as difficulties are reported.](http://subsite.</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

### **The Establishment and Development of the Children's Bilingual Education Project (CBEP)**

The Children's Bilingual Education Project (CBEP) is a family-oriented Saturday School that provides for bilingual children in the community of International Christian University (ICU) to study their minority language, English. It is a parent-run and parent-taught school whereby the curriculum, syllabi and a certain amount of teaching materials are developed by the participating parents based on the specific needs of their bilingual children. This School, a research project of the Institute for Educational Research and Services of ICU since 2000, is one of the rare cases of child bilingual research in Japan.

### ***The Campus English Playgroup (CEP): First stage of the Saturday School***

In April, 1999, six families (See Table 1) who were raising children bilingually formed a bilingual circle named “Campus English Playgroup” (CEP) on ICU campus in Mitaka City, Tokyo. The children of the group were between three and eight years of age and attending Japanese kindergartens (See Table 2). The six families came from various language and cultural backgrounds (Table 1). Each family had one parent who was a member of the faculty of the university. However, no parents had had direct experience in teaching language to children in formal settings prior to the establishment of the group.

CEP met once a week on weekends at member families’ houses for one hour each class. Parents took turns to teach the classes and prepared their own lessons or taught under the supervision initially of the organizer and coordinator (a language teacher-parent) of the group. As some parent-teachers had little or no experience in teaching, basic teacher training was provided: studying sample lesson plans, observing other teachers, meetings with the coordinator, exchanging ideas amongst teachers and so on. CEP’s schedule followed the schedule of the academic terms of ICU running for about 10 weeks a term, three terms a year.

The objectives of the CEP were to provide the member families’ bilingual children with a social and peer group where English, the home language for the majority of the children, could be used and learned. It was an effort exerted by the parents to teach their home or the minority language (i.e. English)

and to maintain children’s interest and motivation. To achieve these goals, the integrated-skills syllabus was designed to incorporate various needs of the children and the requirements of the parents. All lessons were immersion classes in English language only. Among the four language skills, listening and speaking were thought to be the foremost skills to be reinforced given the age of the children, the limited linguistic knowledge and the ‘fun’ factor that would motivate the children to continue with the group or the language (see Appendix 1 for sample lesson plan). Having considered the characteristics of the children at that age (Table 2), variation in the types of exercises and activities was also encouraged in order to attract the interest of the children. Since each family could design the lessons freely in the general framework of language skills and knowledge, i.e. vocabulary and grammar, each lesson was different and unique demonstrating the individual teachers’ philosophy of life and bilingualism and the families’ cultural background. Typical activities were singing, playing games involving physical coordination, listening to stories, recognizing the English alphabet and simple words. Another characteristic of the group was that all teachers were parents who were experienced with children in terms of their behavior, interests and attention span. This advantage assisted the teachers greatly in their lesson planning as well as classroom management. Moreover, the fact that the children were familiar to all the parent-teachers who were neighbors in the same community helped reduce the anxiety of the children and build a rapport between children and teachers. An important feature of the curriculum of the CEP was to provide a

supportive environment for developing and maintaining English language in a social group and not to force children to follow a

pre-made syllabus with pre-set standards of proficiency attainment. Thus, no formal or informal tests were given.

**Table 1**  
**Background of Families (April, 1999)**

Families	Ethnic-National Background of Parents	Language(s) Spoken by Parents	Children	Languages Used with Children at Home
WJ	F: Chinese (Singaporean) M*(C):Chinese (Singaporean)	F: Chinese, Japanese English M: Chinese, English, Japanese, French	Child 1	F: Chinese M: English
JA	F*: British, Irish M*:Japanese	F: English, French, Japanese M: Japanese, English	Child 2	F: English, French M: Japanese; English
PM	F*: American M*: Korean	F: English, Japanese M: Korean, English, Japanese	Child 3	F: English M: Japanese, English
TM	F*:Japanese M*:Japanese	F: English, Japanese M: Japanese, English	Child 4	F: Japanese, English M: Japanese, English
RM	F*: American M: Japanese	F: English, Japanese, German M: Japanese, English	Child 5	F: English, Japanese M: Japanese
SS	F: Japanese M:Japanese	F: Japanese, English, Chinese M: Japanese, English	Child 6	F: Japanese M: Japanese
F = father    M = mother		* = the main teacher from the family		(C) = Coordinator

**Table 2**  
**Background of Children (April 1999)**

Children	Age & Sex	Birthplace	Dominant Language (s)	Years of Exposure to Japanese	Years of Exposure to English prior to CEP at home	Other Languages Understood beside English
1	5 m	Singapore	Japanese	3 yr	5 yr	Chinese
2	4 f	Japan	Japanese	4 yr	4 yr	French
3	4 f	Japan	Japanese	3 yr	4 yr	Korean
4	3 f	U.S.A.	Japanese and English	3 yr	3 yr	none
5	4 m	Japan	Japanese	4 yr	4 yr	none
6	8 f	Japan	Japanese	8 yr	none	none
m = male    f = female		yr = year(s)				

When CEP was established, most children had received little or no training in the English language in formal settings. Since all of them were attending Japanese kindergartens, their English was confined to their homes and at a lower level than that of children of the same age group whose first language was English. Most children were only just beginning to read the English alphabet.

Due to the diverse nature of the group, two differences amongst the children and family language policies could be observed. First, the levels of proficiency were different. Some children could already use English in daily conversation at home while others who had received little or no input at home had to struggle to understand the instructions given in class. This gap was related to the different family language policies adopted by the individual families. In Child 1's family, his mother spoke to him only in English using the one-parent-one-language method. Children 2, 3 and 4 had mixed but systematic input in both languages from both parents. Child 5 was in occasional contact with English as his father spoke in English at home to other members of family. Child 6's family had no input of English and treated English as a foreign language to be learned outside of the family. Second, there was a wide range of age from three to eight years old. Designing classes that could satisfy the interests of the different ages and at the same time provide cognitive stimuli for both ends was a challenging task to all teachers.

Six months into the first year of the CEP, a parents' meeting was held to reflect on the program and to plan future curriculum. It was noted that the children's motivation of

learning was higher than that at the beginning and their attitudes towards learning English had improved. Children were keen to attend classes with or without their parents accompanying them. It was encouraging to observe achievement in respect of language proficiency. All children made noticeable progress in communicative skills, basic vocabulary and grammar as well as reading. Some parents commented that their children who had refused to talk in English at home could now carry out simple daily conversations. With these short-term successful results in hand, the parents decided to formalize the group and turn it into a longitudinal research project which would contribute more academically to the field of child bilingualism.

### ***Saturday School: The second stage of CBEP***

In September, 1999, the Campus English Playgroup was officially changed to the Children's Bilingual Education Project (CBEP) or the Saturday School to the children, a designated research project of the Institute for Educational Research and Services (IERS) of International Christian University. Along with the formalization, the focus of the syllabus shifted from the oral communicative skills of mainly listening and speaking with basic vocabulary and grammar to literacy development in reading and writing. Home education-oriented textbooks were adopted formally for the purpose of giving formal input, maintaining consistency among teachers and assigning homework. The length of each lesson was increased to 1.5 hours from one hour. The Saturday School

was also provided with a classroom and ended “touring” around the houses. The new location with white boards, desks and chairs played a crucial function of formalizing the School: teachers could give more formal instructions using the white boards and children were able to handle more writing assignments comfortably.

The Saturday School adopted a flexible system that allowed child bilinguals to join and leave any time without pressure. Hence, the demography of the project was never fixed. When the CEP was established, there were six children (Table 2 above). Numbers had fluctuated between a low of four and a high of six. Children joined and left for a variety of reasons. The main reasons for join-

ing included providing bilingual children with the opportunity to improve their English and / or to maintain their English in a peer group. Among the main reasons for children leaving were relocation of the family and lack of support both in the surrounding environment and also from their family (Shi 2001c). At the time of this report (November, 2001), there are six children in the project (Tables 3 & 4).

After the Saturday School was formalized into a research project, the major adjustments were found in curriculum design, teaching materials and methodology, language input and the role of teachers. With the use of textbooks designed for L1 children whose first language was English, the focus of skills shift-

**Table 3**  
**Background of Families (November, 2001)**  
**(Demographic Changes)**

<b>Families</b>	<b>Ethnic-National Background of Parents</b>	<b>Language(s) Spoken by Parents</b>	<b>Children</b>	<b>Languages Used with Children at Home</b>
WJ	F: Chinese (Singaporean) M*(C):Chinese (Singaporean)	F: Chinese, Japanese English M: Chinese, English, Japanese, French	Child 1	F: Chinese M: English
JA	F*:British, Irish M: Japanese	F: English, French, Japanese M: Japanese, English	Child 2	F: English, French M: Japanese; English
PM	F: American M*: Korean	F: English, Japanese M: Korean, English, Japanese	Child 3	F: English M: Japanese, English
TM	F*: Japanese M: Japanese	F: English, Japanese M: Japanese, English	Child 4	F: English, Japanese M: Japanese, English
FY	F*: Irish M: Japanese	F: English, Gaelic, Dutch, Japanese M: Japanese, English	Child 5	F: English M: Japanese, English
MN	F: American M: Japanese	F: English, Japanese M: Japanese, English	Child 6	F: English, Japanese M: Japanese, English
F = father    M= mother		* = the main teacher from the family		(C) = Coordinator

ed from listening and speaking to reading and writing. Though the language skills were still largely integrated in the classes, sub-literacy areas such as reading and writing phrases or sentences, phonic spelling and grammatical items were focused upon more than before in order to provide sufficient practice. Different varieties of vocabulary, both school- and society- related, filled in the gaps of children's lexical knowledge.

The children of the School made a rather smooth transition without much difficulty adapting themselves to the different types of exercises in textbooks that focused mainly on literacy development. Most children coped with the new materials and methodology satisfactorily keeping good record of attendance and classroom participation. Younger and weaker members were encouraged to learn at their own pace and assured that they would not be pushed to follow the progress of the majority group. The successful shift to literacy is of great significance in cognitive development and a big step towards biliteracy. Since all classes were conducted in English

primarily, children's speaking and listening abilities showed positive signs of improvement instead of being hindered. As stated above, most family bilingual education of young children tends to focus on oral communication and child bilinguals are generally reluctant to get started with literacy at home, especially when the writing systems are as different as Japanese and English. The acceptance of literacy training by the children could also be explained by the fact that it was introduced in a group rather than individually. As Hoffman pointed out "Naturally, language interaction involves communication in a wider social cultural setting." (1991) In some situations of minority families, the social and cultural influence that children receive from their peers could be more crucial than from their parents or teachers in determining the fate of children's bilingual development.

To enhance literacy development, several other measures have been taken since 1999. In December, 2000, the Saturday School children put on an English play, Aesop's "*The*

**Table 4**  
**Background of Children (November, 2001)**  
**(Demographic Changes)**

Children	Age & Sex	Birthplace	Dominant Language (s)	Years of Exposure to Japanese	Years of Exposure to English prior to CEP at home	Other Languages Understood beside English
1	8 m	Singapore	Japanese	6 (in Japan)	2.5 yr (8 yr)	Chinese
2	7 f	Japan	Japanese	7 (in Japan)	2.5 yr (7 yr)	French
3	7 f	Japan	Japanese	6 (in Japan)	2.5 yr (7 yr)	Korean
4	6 f	U.S.A.	Japanese	6 (2 in USA, 4 in Japan)	2.5 yr (6 yr)	French
5	9 f	Japan	Japanese	9 (in Japan)	8 months (9 yr)	none
6	8 m	Japan	English	8 (3 in Japan 5 in USA)	4 months (8 yr)	none

m = male      f = female      yr = year(s)



*Wind and the Sun*”, and sang two Christmas carols for a Christmas Party which was planned as a Saturday School event. The play was re-written and directed by one of the teachers, and the Christmas carols were taught by some parents and volunteer ICU students. Learning to read, memorizing and then performing their parts in English were a valuable literacy as well as cultural experience. Another English play, Charles Dickens’s “*A Christmas Carol*”, was performed for Christmas 2001 as a “reading play” because children had to read their parts from a script instead of reciting the lines. Another major development of the organization and curriculum of the School is the addition of Wednesday afternoon sessions which run for an hour every other Wednesday. It has been noted by the parents that more reading and writing homework should be assigned to achieve continuity and provide more practice in reading and writing skills that cannot be finished in class. The needs for more class and group time come from the complexity of reading and writing exercises, the lack of time for developing higher communication skills and the amount of homework assignments. Wednesday sessions, though not every week, help build the link between Saturdays and provide extra time to finish either homework or what has not been finished on Saturdays. In October, 2001, a new project aiming to improve literacy development, a “Sharing Library”, began. Books in English from member families will be collected to create a common library that children are able to borrow from and read either at home or in the library. This library collection is currently being constructed.

## Conclusion

The bilingual education project has seen changes and development in various respects. Compared with the proficiency level of the children at the beginning of the School, April, 1999 (see above), the children have made substantial improvement. The middle and upper groups can handle simple reading in paragraphs and writing at the sentence level. Speaking and listening skills are still more advanced than reading and writing — a general pattern of the group — which coincides with the natural development of first language learners. The emphasis on literacy has not delayed the development of speaking and listening. On the contrary, parents have commented that their children are more willing to use English at home and tend also to employ longer utterances in their speech. As they grow older, the children can manage more complex tasks at longer length and at more frequent intervals as shown in their preparation of the multilingual and stylistically complex Christmas play, “*A Christmas Carol*” which is more than half an hour long. This observation also applies to the participation in Wednesday sessions.

The motivation and attitudes of the group have been consistently positive though there is marked variation between the proficiency levels of individuals and their rate of progress. This indicates that a peer group (the ‘Saturday School’ in this study) which comprises a small-scale speech community, benefits young bilinguals in many aspects. In most of the classes of the Saturday School, children with higher language proficiency are encouraged to help the weaker and younger members of the group. Hence, a cooperative

learning environment is created for children to develop and share their linguistic knowledge and to feel supported by other members of the group. Teachers have observed that the cognitive development of the children has grown as evidenced by the children's developing metalinguistic awareness of the typological identity (sic. 'differences') between the Japanese and English language systems. Although this lies beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that there have been reports on these children's abilities to translate between two languages and how the learning of English has benefited the learning of other languages as in the case of Child 1 (Shi 2001b). Furthermore, learning together for more than two years has provided the children with a strong sense of belonging and group identity (Shi 2001a). Studying together makes them feel "normal" psychologically instead of out of place especially when the target language is a home or minority language and not a school or societally dominant language.

One of the strengths of the CBEP project lies in its flexible system that allows the project to evolve according to the needs and development of children and parents. Parents' meetings are held once or twice a term to discuss new issues and address problems. There is need for constant up-dating of the curriculum, syllabi, lesson plans and textbooks. A new curriculum will be implemented in 2002 to include a literature component and a writing workshop that will provide a higher level of literacy training.

This project is a longitudinal study of family and child bilingualism in Japan. Further investigation on the variations of language

input by individual families, parental and children's motivation and attitudes, the language attainment and the curriculum changes will be carried out.

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## Appendix 1

### Sample Lesson Plan of CEP: Integrated-Skills Syllabus (September, 1999)

Lesson \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Date/Day \_\_\_\_\_

	<i>Warming-up/ Reviews (5-10 min.)</i>	<i>New Items (15-20 min.)</i>	<i>Re-enforcement (15-20 min.)</i>	<i>Closing (5-10 min.)</i>
<b>Speaking</b>		<i>3. Listening to the song again along</i>		
<b>Listening</b>				
<b>Reading</b>			<i>4. Matching words of body parts with pictures</i>	
<b>Writing</b>			<i>5. Copy key words</i>	
<b>Vocabulary</b>		<i>2. Name of body parts</i>		
<b>Grammar</b>				<i>6. Can you find. . . ?</i>
<b>Games/Songs</b>	<i>1. "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes"</i>			<i>7. Fishing game of finding the right word ("fish").</i>